

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01  
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15  
USIA-06 DHA-02 ORM-02 OMB-01 AID-05 /077 W  
----- 088251 /73

R 220310Z DEC 76  
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7491  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
USLO PEKING  
AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SHUM PINS PDIP PROP LA CH  
SUBJECT: POLITICAL PRISONERS IN PHONGSALY

REF A VIENTIANE 2293, B VIENTIANE 2935

1. A LAO WOMAN WHOSE HUSBAND IS A PRISONER IN A PHONGSALY WORKCAMP TOLD EMBOFF DECEMBER 21 THAT SHE HAD MET THREE DAYS EARLIER WITH A CHINESE BUSINESSMAN WHO WAS RELEASED IN LATE NOVEMBER FROM A PHONGSALY DETENTION CENTER. THE CHINESE MAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT HE WAS FREED BECAUSE THE PRC EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE MADE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE LAO GOVERNMENT ON HIS BEHALF. HE ALSO REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE PRC EMBASSY IS DOING THE SAME FOR OTHER CHINESE PRSIONERS IN THE PHONGSALY WORK CAMPS.

2. THE CHINESE MAN TOLD THE LAO WOMAN THAT HE HAD WITNESSED THE FIRING SQUAD EXECUTION OF THEIR MUTUAL FRIEND WHO WAS CAUGHT TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE  
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CAMP. ALTHOUGH THE CHINESE MAN TOLD THE LAO WOMAN THAT HE HAD SEEN NO INCIDENTS OF TORTURE, HE DID SAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT REQUIRED ALL PRISONERS TO WITNESS THE EXECUTION.

3. THE CHINESE MAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT THE PONGSALY

WORK CAMPS WERE A NETWORK OF SMALL UNFENCED VILLAGES SCATTERED THROUGHOUT A RIVER VALLEY. THE LAO WOMAN TOLD EMBOFF THAT SHE BELIEVED THERE WERE ABOUT 8000 PRISONERS IN THE WORK CAMPS.

4. THE CHINESE MAN TOLD THE LAO WOMAN THAT CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS ARE ROUGHT BUT BEARABLE FOR THE PRISONERS. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED BASIC TOOLS LIKE SHOVELS AND HAND SAWS TO PRSIONERS WHO MUST THEN CONSTRUCT THEIR OWN SHELTERS. HE SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED SUFFICIENT RICE BUT THAT THE PRESIONERS HAD TO PROVIDE ANYTHING ELSE TO EAT THEMSELVES BY GARDENING AND GATHERING.

5. A LAO PILOT SEPARATELY TOLD THE LAO WOMAN WHO IN TURN TOLD EMBOFF THAT HE FLIES A SUPPLY OF ABOUT 50 TO 60 SACKS OF STICKY RICE ABOUT EVERY FOUR MONTHS FROM VIENTIANE TO PHONGSALY FOR THE CAMPS.

6. ACCORDING TO THE CHINESE MAN, ON AN AVERAGE DAY PRISONERS AWOKE AT 5:00 A.M. TO TEND THEIR GARDENS OR WORK IN THE RICE FIELDS. LATER IN THE MORNING THE CAMP INMATES ATTENED POLITICAL LECTURES. IN THE AFTERNOON THEY PARTICIPATED IN POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS WHERE COMMUNIST GUARDS OBSERVED THE "CORRECTNESS OF THEIR THINKING". THE CHINESE MAN REPORTEDLY SAID THAT PRESIONERS WHO WERE JUDGED "REFORMED" BY THE CAMP GUARDS WOULD BE SENT TO FARMING VILLAGES TO LEAD POLITICAL SEMINARS.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptoning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** DETENTION, POLITICAL PRISONERS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 DEC 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** coburnhl  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976VIENTI02960  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D760469-0293  
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**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
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**Line Count:** 97  
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**Office:** ACTION EA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 2  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** coburnhl  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 26 APR 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <26 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <12 AUG 2004 by coburnhl>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** POLITICAL PRISONERS IN PHONGSALY  
**TAGS:** SHUM, PINS, PDIP, PROP, LA, CH  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006